

SIERRA NEVADA CONSERVANCY
PUBLIC WORKSHOP
PLACERVILLE, CA
MARCH 29, 2007

PROGRAM GUIDELINES
QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS

1. **Regarding Program Guidelines, page 5, "SNC Sub-Regions Defined": SNC may want to list excluded areas, such as Lake Tahoe, in the defined subregions.**
2. Regarding Program Guidelines, page 10, "Assist the Regional Economy": How will SNC help? Target economic development areas, or is that just by opening up shop?
3. Who will partnership and collaboration be with?
4. SNC can hold an easement, but not the fee title? Has SNC thought about formats or structure for conservation easements? Has SNC worked through what conditions would be appropriate for easements? It would be a useful effort.
5. **Regarding Program Guidelines, page 16, "Priorities": Will subregions provide input on priorities and problems? When those priorities are set, will SNC ignore proposals outside of those priorities?**
6. **Regarding Program Guidelines, page 7, "Provide Increased Opportunities for Tourism and Recreation": Define "shoulder," as in shoulder season.**
7. **Regarding Program Guidelines, page 7, "Protect, Conserve, and Restore Resources": Historical rail beds and trails, why are those not defined and included?** If we give up rail beds we give up the opportunity to provide historical and cultural meaning to the whole area. El Dorado County needs to maintain the Southern Pacific lines and get the route to Folsom and Coloma; this is a good opportunity for people to get out of their cars.
8. Regarding Program Guidelines, page 8, bullet 1: In regards to the "facilitation of land swap opportunities with state and federal agencies," as far as a Sierra-wide issue, if staff could develop expertise and make that type of program function better, that would be a huge help.
9. Regarding Program Guidelines, page 9, "Protect and Improve Water and Air Quality": Water supply quantity is not a prime function of SNC, but the Cosumnes, American, Bear, and Yuba Integrated Regional Water Management Plan group would like to integrate with SNC efforts. **Would projects with water supply as primary benefit be considered?**
10. **Regarding Program Guidelines, page 12, "Acquisitions": In regard to the requirement that acquisitions contain a provision for automatic reversion to SNC under certain conditions, if SNC can't hold the fee title would you identify up front what party that would revert to?**

11. The American River Conservancy supports SNC's program areas and the effort to provide a competitive edge to those projects with multiple benefits. In some cases, program areas will subtly affect easements, other land instruments, and funding allocations. Some property owners will not accept deed restrictions, flexibility on SNC's part may be required here.
12. **Regarding Program Guidelines, page 16, "Sub-Regional and Regional Priorities": When will priority setting occur?** SNC is prioritizing projects that come in, not having overall priorities set? It looks like SNC has the bases covered with the program areas but you run the risk of a scattershot approach, with inadequate focus on regional priorities. **It seems like SNC should allow the subregions to set their own priorities and use those.**
13. **Regarding Program Guidelines, page 16, "Project Submission": Working with SNC staff in pre-application process, does that apply to both Competitive Grants and Strategic Opportunity Grants (SOGs)?**

GRANT GUIDELINES QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS

1. Who qualifies to receive grants?
2. Would \$54 million be allocated across three years at \$17 million each year?
3. **Can a project continue for three years?**
4. **Regarding Grant Guidelines, page 3, "Eligible Costs": Regarding direct costs, would SNC consider staff time contributions as a match from a smaller non-profit? Could staff time be supported?**
5. What are the current funding sources?
6. **In regards to Competitive Grants and SOGs, funding matches are not required?** Those projects that do show matching funds would be more competitive?
7. **Would SNC look at economic benefits and drawbacks of projects?**
8. Is there assistance for planning? The have-nots often control ground but have no money for planning.
9. Can you provide examples of projects SNC might sponsor?
10. **In terms of the award, how long will grantees have to spend the money or complete the project?**
11. What is the grant timeline process?
12. If you have a funding partner whose funding cycle is out of whack with SNC's funding cycle, would that be a time to look at a SOG rather than a Competitive Grant?
13. When would consultations on SOGs start?
14. **Competitive Grants, they are a one-phase process rather than a pre-proposal? SNC is not using a concept proposal phase for Competitive Grants process?**
15. Will there be examples of what constitutes a full score for evaluation? Some other programs don't justify the scores that are assigned. It can be hard to find out why a proposal scored what it did.

16. How will applications be posted and will there also be language available for legal review regarding any necessary agreements? Will application forms be available online? Does SNC have the capability to notify people when applications are available? Or will they just have to keep checking the web?
17. **Will some amount of project funding be held back contingent on final reporting?**
18. **Look at what lessons have been learned from CALFED and other grant programs so that those issues don't have to be redone. CALFED also has quality control requirements that necessitate a lot of time on the part of the grantees. Don't want a lot of funds going to administration.**
19. Intend to submit a grant proposal and think it would do well as a Competitive Grant proposal, but have a time constraint. **SOGs have a \$1 million per subregion limit, Competitive Grants have more money, is there any flexibility on allocations between these categories?**
20. **Regarding Grant Guidelines, page 2, "Eligible Projects," item 3: For clarity, can we assume that SNC will not pay for mitigation for some other project that is already being done?**
21. **Regarding Grant Guidelines, page 2, "Eligible Applicants": Check language, SNC is not saying that there have to be partners on a grant?**
22. Regarding Grant Guidelines, page 6, "Land Tenure": This is understandable; there needs to be some type of agreement with the landowner, but something less than "I will sell you my land."
23. Regarding Grant Guidelines, page 6, "Project Proposal and Evaluation": How does this compare against other agencies' point systems? It might be helpful for SNC to have web links to other agencies' grant programs in order to compare their point systems. May be helpful for project sponsors to see how a project fits with other funding programs.
24. **Regarding Grant Guidelines, page 7, "Threat": The perception of threat is worth ten points. Given the range of program areas, is this maybe too high? For example, invasive weeds can be considered a threat, but the threat is very different when considering the threat of fire. Also, the local threat may not be high, but regional threat may be more. It seems like threat needs to be put into a broader context, and that there may be some skewing to certain types of projects in the evaluation criteria. Think five points for threat is better.**
25. Regarding Grant Guidelines, page 10: Sustainability is a buzz-word, but also a profound concept. **Don't see smart growth, sustainability, or other related concepts built into the project evaluation criteria.** Is there a definition? Need a long term perspective.
26. Within State agencies, acquisitions have been very difficult due to operation and management requirements. Maybe ten to fifteen percent of the grant funds could be channeled into an endowment for operation and management.

27. There is no reference as to whether or not the SNC Board's decision-making is considered a project under the California Environmental Quality Act, and how that will be addressed. Who would be the lead agency? How does the identification of the lead agency affect project competitiveness? For some projects, such as a region-wide proposal for fire safe management, would SNC be in a position to assist with programmatic Environmental Impact Reports?
28. Comment from the Sierra Nevada Alliance: We really support small-scale grant opportunities, they are important for helping small groups build capacity. **SNC might want to talk about the reality of upper limits for big projects. What reporting requirements will there be for grants? Will grants be reimbursable or have up-front funding?** It would be good to clarify that SNC is not expecting to get \$1 million applications for SOGs. Also, smaller groups have trouble with invoicing and cash flow. Easier reporting requirements for SOGS, especially small SOGs, would help.
29. I'm interested in trail connectivity for walking and riding. **If a project has an opportunity to make a trail more contiguous, how much information would SNC look for to show that the project was consistent with existing plans or proposals?** If there was a project that could/should address roads/trails, but doesn't, will you encourage that aspect be considered?

OTHER QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS

1. Regarding HR 680, Boxer's Wildlands project: It looks it might shut down a lot of land, is SNC tracking this?
2. Regarding the broad scope of the mission statement: The element that crosses over the whole statement is wildfire. Particularly in regards to the Bureau of Land Management and the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) there needs to be a significant ramp-up of efforts for the removal of fuels/fire reduction. This affects public use. Catastrophic wildfire risks destroying scenic, recreational, and biological values. This is an overarching issue and cuts across many program areas.
3. For SNC to develop a region-wide program to deal with wildfires would be very helpful.
4. Would like to see SNC develop a volunteer program, like the volunteers in parks. There is a plethora of retired employees who could provide a lot of assistance. They could be provided with meals and places to stay.
5. Within the State umbrella there are seven to eight programs that are complementary to SNC money. Surprising how many are mutually exclusive.
6. Really looking forward to SNC bringing sister agencies together and stimulating the sharing of information, for example the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection's (CDF) Fire and Resource Assessment Program and the Department of Water Resources.

7. There is difficulty in consistency across agencies. El Dorado is trying to deal with oaks and this has led to significant discussions on conservation easements. It would be useful for SNC to coordinate/standardize guidelines and language for conservation easements. SNC may be uniquely structured to help accommodate everyone.
8. We have talked with the Wildlife Conservation Board recently, and a lot of these conservation easement efforts aren't getting considered in a way that focuses on what will happen in the future.
9. Regarding the construction of the Auburn Dam and restoration of Hetch Hetchy, what would SNC's statutory authority be on those?
10. Trying to figure out the existing processes, for example USFS promotes fuel reduction timber sales, communities are developing strategic plans for land to be converted from un-preferred to preferred land conditions, CDF has its processes, etc. There is also the Farm Bill and the Fire Safe Councils. It would be good to take a comprehensive look at what is being done through mapping/GIS products to see how to corral all of the things going on.
11. SNC could help CDF come up with rules for fire safe areas and habitat protection. The original fire safe rules are not good for habitat, need balance.
12. Regarding SNC as a "neutral convener": Is there a strategy for convening to address contentious issues? How might that be addressed? Have you had detailed discussions about what that means?
13. Watershed coordinators also try to serve as neutral conveners. How can SNC support watershed coordinators and their roles? SNC would partner with other entities involved in this effort?
14. At the last SNC board meeting, it was helpful to hear about how a program might be implemented in different regions. I like the idea of prioritizing how rather than which.
15. Regarding the Grant Guidelines, "Proposal Evaluation": Not seen here is an assessment of whether there is a competing mechanism to fund a given proposal anyway. In other words, is SNC funding projects that would have been funded anyway?
16. \$17 million seems like a lot of money, so does \$54 million. Will SNC be doing anything to help applicants figure out the scope and dollar value of regional needs? Fire issues alone are very costly.

SUBREGIONAL ISSUES RAISED

1. Tourism/recreation
 - a. Trail development/maintenance
2. Invasive weed control
3. Restoring/protecting cultural resources
4. Water quantity
5. Economic development/community planning
6. Fire risk reduction

7. Maintenance
8. Habitat protection